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USDA'S REPORT TO CONSUMERS

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TO MARKET, TO MARKET

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Some Moving Facts. The U.S. food marketing system serves Americans by getting farm products to consumers in the form and at the time they want them. A primary and major part of the system is getting the food products off the farm. Each year about 392 millions tons of products are transported off U.S. farms -- about one ton per cultivated acre. To haul these products, the U.S. has over two hundred thousand miles of railroads, 1.9 million railcars, 16.8 million trucks and 3.3 million miles of intercity highways (1968 figures), and 26 thousand miles of improved waterways. And even though most foods are hauled hundreds of miles between producer and consumer, transportation takes only six cents out of the food dollar.

NATIONAL LAWN AND GARDEN WEEK

Goodbye Winter, Hello Spring. For millions of dedicated gardeners and yardners, March is not too soon to begin planning for Spring. But this year one day that really will set the green thumbs twitching is March 20 -- the first day of Spring. Besides promising warmer weather, longer days, and green things to come, March 20 also ushers in National Lawn and Garden Week. This annual observance, with its "Growing With America" symbol, is an opportunity for celebration of year-round residential and community programs of planning, planting, and enjoying the beauty and utility of plants. It gives national focus and direction to the activities of garden clubs, civic and service organizations, youth groups, and other community groups in their efforts to make more attractive towns. This year a supplementary theme, "Country Green for City Living," stresses the special values of horticulture in the urban environment. National Lawn and Garden Week is under the joint leadership of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, national offices of garden clubs, and lawn and garden trade associations. A special event supporting Lawn and Garden Week is the Growing With America Festival to be held March 18 - 21 in the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C.



National Lawn and
Garden Week
March 20-26, 1971



THE TARGET: ENVIRONMENT

ACP To REAP. Included in the U.S. Department of Agriculture's concentrated attack on environment and conservation problems is the newly restructured Rural Environmental Assistance Program (REAP), formerly Agricultural Conservation Program (ACP). Under this program farmers will carry out needed conservation and environmental protection measures on their farms, with costs shared by the Federal Government. Emphasis will be on long-range preservation of the environment. A recent allocation of REAP funds will enable the Federal Government, in cooperation with farmers, community groups, and local governments, to make substantial inroads on some of the most pressing farm-related environmental problems. A major thrust will be reduction of water pollution. On-farm dams and ponds, permanent grass covers, waterways, buffer strips, and tree plantings will be encouraged. These will be directed toward off-the-farm benefits such as silt and pollution abatement, enduring soil and water conservation, recreation, wildlife, and open spaces. REAP will be administered by USDA's Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service through its farm-elected State and County Committee system.

HOW DO YOU LIKE YOUR MILK?

Deep-Fried? USDA scientists have developed a food that would make both Miss Muffet and the spider sit up and take notice. It is deep-fried milk curd. To make the new food, chemists of USDA's Agricultural Research Service add calcium chloride to skim milk to form the curd. This is heated, cut into bite-sized pieces, and deep-fried in hot oil until slightly brown. The result is a product which is meatlike in texture, does not fall apart on prolonged heating, is bland, and has good storage qualities. The texture as well as the flavor can be modified to suit individual tastes. Fried curd can be canned in a meat-flavored gravy or it can be used for snacks, hors d'oeuvres, or confections. Soaked in water, the fried curd will keep under refrigeration for two weeks; at room temperature, sterilized curd will keep three months. The new food is high in nutritious milk protein and obviously is quite different from the traditional forms of milk and dairy products. People who reject milk may find fried milk curds acceptable as a dairy food in their diets.

KEEP YOUR HOUSE PLANTS SMILING

Control Those Bugs and Other Ughs! Healthy, sturdy house plants are a delight in a home. They brighten the eye and soul, and by producing oxygen, help keep the home air fresh. But for all their goodness, they have enemies -- ants, mites, aphids, caterpillars, mealybugs, millipedes -- not to mention, earthworms, slugs, and snails and other pests. Tips on how to recognize and control these and other common attackers of house plants are given in a recently revised booklet, "Insects and Related Pests of House Plants: How To Control Them" (HG 67). Scientists of USDA's Agricultural Research Service prepared the publication which offers several control measures that minimize the need for pesticides. Measures such as isolating new plants from other plants for about a month; using sterilized potting soil to prevent infestations of soil pests; cleaning broad-leaved plants by rinsing or washing with soapy water and brushing with a soft cloth or brush to remove some pests. For occasions when pesticides are needed, the publication discusses the proper pesticide, suitable equipment, and necessary precautions to use for safe and effective control. Copies of the publication may be obtained for 10 cents each from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402.

CASH AND FOOD AID CHILD NUTRITION

Tops \$1 Billion. More than \$1 billion in USDA funds and foods is helping to bolster nutrition of the Nation's children. This is some 25 percent more than the \$754 million that went into child nutrition programs last year. Cash apportionment of child nutrition funds to the 50 States, the District of Columbia, and five territories total nearly \$725 million; USDA foods being donated for child feeding programs are valued at more than \$311 million. Most of the extra cash is to assist States in providing free or reduced price meals to needy children in cooperative Federal-State-local programs. For the first time, a part of the funds will be budgeted for nutrition education and training and to assist in financing developmental projects. The cash apportionment to States includes: assistance for on-going lunch services available to all children in schools cooperating in the National School Lunch Program; reimbursement to schools for free or reduced-price lunches and breakfasts for needy children; reimbursement to needy schools for part of the cost of equipment to initiate, expand, or improve feeding programs; assistance under the Special Food Service Program for Children in day-care and recreation centers and other non-school situations; and help to defray the cost of milk served to children by schools and child care organizations. USDA-donated foods are available to States for their use in all food service programs for children.

A HOMEMAKER'S CHALLENGE

Keeping A Family Well Fed. Stretching food dollars in today's well-stocked markets is a challenge to most shoppers, regardless of income. Many homemakers find it useful to have a plan of action before leaving home for the food market -- making a shopping list, checking food ads, making tentative menus for the coming day or week. A new USDA publication, "Your Money's Worth in Foods," can be a great help in this planning. The booklet, prepared by home economists in USDA's Agricultural Research Service, gives information which can sharpen food shopping skills and help the homemaker feed her family well. Costs at 1970 prices are shown for individuals of various ages using low-, moderate-, and liberal-cost food plans and there is a table showing the food plan that families of different sizes and incomes can usually afford. From this information a homemaker can estimate the amount of money to spend for food. Other helpful items in the booklet include a daily food guide, sample menus at two different costs, and information on meal patterns and meal planning, shopping lists, and amounts of food to buy. Copies of "Your Money's Worth in Foods," (H&G 183) are available for 25 cents each from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402.

NO MUSS, NO FUSS

Washable Woolens. All-wool fabric can be as easy-care as synthetics! Wool has long been a favorite with fashion designers for its draping qualities, ability to take colors, and depth of weave. But it was often passed up by consumers because it was difficult to clean at home. Thanks to a process developed by scientists in USDA's Agricultural Research Service Western Laboratory in Albany, California, wool can be washed and dried by machine without fear of shrinkage, and needs no ironing. The inexpensive process, applied at textile mills, works on the tiny fibers, protecting the fabric during repeated washings or dry cleanings. To find wash-and-wear woolens in stores, you'll have to check the labels. They're impossible to tell from untreated wools until you wash them. Then, the difference is obvious.



Brighten Up Winter Menus. You can put some summer sunshine and color in your winter-day menus with oranges and orange juice, grapefruit and grapefruit juice, and apples -- all on the February Plentiful Foods List. And heading up the Plentifuls this month are two most versatile foods -- prunes and potatoes. Consider the serving choices: Prunes can be a breakfast fruit, a dessert, a side dish with meat, or a tasty snack; potatoes -- boiled, baked, fried, diced, sliced, whole, grated -- go well anywhere. The February list includes onions, pork, broiler-fryers, and peanuts and peanut products. The March Plentiful Foods will include peanuts, citrus fruits and juices, potatoes, prunes, canned peaches, pork and eggs.

FORMER FARM WORKERS RAISE A NEW CROP

Low-Cost Homes Which They Can Buy. Many farm laborers are accustomed to finding only seasonal work in orchards, fields, and vineyards. They get few employment opportunities in other industries; they get even fewer chances to buy homes of their own. The situation is changing in the Oakley, California, area -- with the help of USDA's Farmers Home Administration. A small construction firm, which has employed full time 28 former farm workers, is building beautiful homes for less than \$10.50 a square foot. Eighty-five percent of each house (including the roof, wall paneling, plumbing, electric wiring, module bathroom, and utility rooms) is built on an assembly line basis at the firm's factory -- a converted warehouse in Oakley. The components are then trucked to the building site for final assembly. Including the lot and utilities, this produces a 3-bedroom house for \$15,000-16,000, a price within reach of most of these farm workers. In fact, with the help of the FHA rural housing loan program, many of the farm workers have purchased homes they have helped build. Under the FHA program, housing loans are made only to applicants unable to obtain credit from other sources, and who live in communities of not more than 5,500 population. Families with low income may qualify for an interest credit supplement which, in effect, lowers the percent of interest they must pay on their loans. Finishing touches are now being put on a 43-house subdivision in Oakley, with a 54-house subdivision planned for a nearby community.

DON'T PUT YOUR PIG IN A POKE

Wrap It Properly. The way you wrap meat and poultry for storage is important in maintaining wholesomeness. USDA's meat and poultry inspectors advise that these products be wrapped loosely for refrigerator storage, but tightly for freezer storage. Always wrap meat or poultry in a moisture-resistant material, such as aluminum foil or freezer paper for freezing. You can refreeze meats and poultry if they still contain ice crystals or if they are still cold and haven't been held at refrigerator temperatures longer than two days. Meat and poultry inspectors caution, though, that refreezing can lower product quality.

SERVICE is a monthly newsletter of consumer interest. It is designed for those who report to the individual consumer rather than for mass distribution. For information about items in this issue, write: Lillie Vincent, Editor of Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of Information, Washington, D.C. 20250. Please include your zipcode.